CALIFORNIA STATE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH
WALTER M. DICKIE, M.D., Director

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The Aeroplane as a Possible Menace to the Public Health

By WALTER M. DICKIE, M.D., Director of Public Health.

Public health officials are interested in the status of the airplane as a potential public health menace. Their interest is not based upon the safety factor alone, but upon the possibility of the airplane bringing acute, rare and rapidly fatal communicable diseases into this country from foreign countries. Each advancing year finds more airplanes flying across our boundaries. In some countries adjoining and in relative proximity to our borders unusual and extremely fatal diseases are endemic. Typhus fever, for example, is endemic in Mexico and tropical diseases rarely encountered here are found in the Central American region. While it may be possible that our climatic conditions would provide a barrier against the permanent residence of these diseases in our country, it is hardly expedient to gamble with a proposition that is so hazardous and which might be productive of such highly undesirable results.

Among other diseases which could be introduced into the country by means of the airplane are Asiatic cholera, plague, yellow fever, dengue, influenza, rabies, many parasitical diseases and tropical diseases strange to our country but which exact heavy losses of life in those countries where they are found. It is a fact that many of the countries where these diseases flourish are within striking distance by airplane. This modern winged carrier possesses the power to infect our people with these strange and highly fatal diseases.

Rabies was at one time exceedingly prevalent in England, but by rigid enforcement of quarantine measures against dogs the disease was finally stamped out completely in 1902. That country was entirely free of this disease until 1918, when a French war aviator brought, by air, a dog that developed rabies shortly after its arrival. Many cases of rabies occurred in England thereafter and it is only recently that through the enforcement of rigid quarantine measures, the disease has again been brought under control. Rabies has appeared in almost every country except Australia, which protects itself against the invasion of the disease by the enforcement of a strict quarantine against dogs. Norway, Sweden and Denmark have had no rabies for fifty years, but the disease is very prevalent in France, Belgium and Russia.

Airplanes travel so rapidly that an airplane passenger may be exposed to a communicable disease in a foreign country but not show any signs of illness until after his arrival in another country. The incubation period for most communicable diseases varies from three days to three weeks. The long voyages by boat generally provide safeguards against the importation of communicable diseases because the time required by the voyage is generally longer than the incubation period for the disease.

The airplane, however, because of its great speed, does not provide such a safeguard. Its status as a factor in the introduction of serious infectious disease is certain to be established definitely within a short time and that it must be regulated, as a possible carrier of communicable diseases, is a foregone conclusion.

The speed of the airship is of great advantage in rushing serums from populous centers to outlying districts when emergencies require it. The airplane is also useful in spreading insecticides over large areas of marshland for the purpose of destroying mosquitoes in their larval stage. These beneficent works may be quite nullified, however, if the airplane is permitted to introduce severe and fatal communicable diseases into places where they are now unknown.

LIST OF DISEASES REPORTABLE BY LAW

- ANTHRAX
- BERI-BERI
- BOTULISM
- CEREBROSPINAL MENINGITIS (Epidemic)
- CHICKENPOX
- CHOLERA, ASIATIC
- COCCIDIOIDAL GRANULOMA
- DENGUE
- DIPHTHERIA
- DYSENTERY (Amoebic)
- DYSENTERY (Bacillary)
- ENCEPHALITIS (Epidemic)
- ERYSIPELAS
- FLUKES
- FOOD POISONING
- GERMAN MEASLES
- GLANDERS
- GONOCCUS INFECTION*
- HOOKWORM
- INFLUENZA
- JAUNDICE (Infectious)
- LEPROSY
- MALARIA
- MEASLES
- MUMPS
- OPHTHALMIA NEONATORUM
- PARATYPHOID FEVER
- PELLAGRA
- PLAGUE
- PNEUMONIA (Lobar)
- POLIOMYELITIS
- RABIES (Animal)
- RABIES (Human)
- ROCKY MOUNTAIN SPOTTED (or Tick) FEVER
- SCARLET FEVER
- SMALLPOX
- SYPHILIS
- TETANUS
- TRACHOMA
- TUBERCULOSIS
- TULAREMIA
- TYPHOID FEVER
- TYPHUS FEVER
- UNDULANT (Malta) FEVER
- WHOOPING COUGH
- YELLOW FEVER

QUARANTINABLE DISEASES

- CEREBROSPINAL MENINGITIS (Epidemic)
- CHOLERA, ASIATIC
- DIPHTHERIA
- ENCEPHALITIS (Epidemic)
- LEPROSY
- PLAGUE
- POLIOMYELITIS
- SCARLET FEVER
- SMALLPOX
- TYPHOID FEVER
- TYPHUS FEVER
- YELLOW FEVER

FOOD UNFIT FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION DESTROYED

Inspectors of the Bureau of Food and Drugs destroyed recently more than 10,000 tins containing sweet potatoes which were understerilized and unfit for human food; 1500 pounds of figs, 318 chickens, 79 bottles of mislabeled or patent medicines or alleged remedies which contained false claims, 16,000 cartons, 75,000 labels and 8000 pieces of literature, all of which contained false and fraudulent statements concerning either nutritive value or therapeutic effects.

STANISLAUS COUNTY VOTES FOR A FULL TIME HEALTH DEPARTMENT

The supervisors of Stanislaus County have taken definite action toward the organization of a regulation county health department with a health officer to serve full time and adequate staff of nurses and sanitary inspectors. Stanislaus County is the eleventh county in California to organize a health department upon a full-time basis.

CALIFORNIA CITIES HAVE LOWEST INFANT MORTALITY RATES IN THE NATION

In a report of infant mortality last year in seven hundred and twenty-nine cities of the United States, just issued by the American Child Health Association, Oakland, Berkeley and Alameda are given credit for having the lowest infant mortality rates among all cities of the country in their respective classifications of populations. San Francisco was third among three large cities having the lowest infant mortality rates for 1928 and Long Beach was one of three cities having the lowest rate in its classification of population. Seattle, Portland and Spokane are other Pacific slope cities which share in the honor of maintaining low infant mortality rates. For many years, cities on this coast have achieved signal honors in the maintenance of these low rates, and 1928 was especially significant in this respect.

INFANT MORTALITY RATES, 1928

Lowest		*Highest*	
Population over 250,000			
Seattle, Wash.	43	Denver, Colo.	91
Portland, Ore.	43	Cincinnati, O.	86
San Francisco, Cal.	46	Jersey City, N. J.	85
Population 100,000-250,000			
Oakland, Cal.	47	Atlanta, Ga.	100
Spokane, Wash.	49	Nashville, Tenn.	99
Des Moines, Ia.	53	Birmingham, Ala.	95
Cambridge, Mass.	53		
Population 50,000-100,000			
Berkeley, Cal.	31	Chattanooga, Tenn.	130
Union City, N. J.	32	Charleston, S. C.	117
Long Beach, Cal.	38	Portsmouth, Va.	108
Population 25,000-50,000			
Alameda, Cal.	25	Petersburg, Va.	141
Medford, Mass.	30	Phoenix, Ariz.	118
Oak Park, Ill.	31	Columbus, Ga.	116
Everett, Mass.	31		

In presenting its report the American Child Health Association says that the infant mortality rate is probably the most sensitive index that we have on the results of public health effort, no really sensitive index yet having been discovered; yet its usefulness as a measure of the success of the public health program in cities may be impaired by local factors quite foreign to the activities of public health agencies. The association states, further, that the presence or absence of institutions and homes for babies, the state of health, family customs, characteristics of different race and nationality groups, knowledge, and probably climate, each has an unquestioned part in determining the size of the infant mortality rate, and these influences must be reckoned with as well as the thoroughness of the prenatal and infant welfare program. As a meter of public health progress, contributed to from various channels, the infant mortality rate is most serviceable as in index of trend from year to year within the same city. Its utility will be broadened as means are developed for standardizing rates by making proper allowances for environmental and social influences outside the field of deliberate public health activity.

The following table indicates the urban infant mortality rates for 1928 for the six states of first rank. The infant mortality rate for the state of California as a whole was 62.4 in 1928 and the rate for the 24 larger cities of the state was 55.

Rank by urban I. M. rate	*State*	*Urban rate*	*Number of cities*
1	Washington	43.0	10
2	Idaho	44.0	2
3	Oregon	44.0	4
4	North Dakota	50.0	3
5	Utah	54.0	3
6	California	55.0	24

The following table gives the infant mortality rates for California cities for the years 1927 and 1928, and the average rate for the years 1921 to 1925. It will be noted that, in almost all instances, the rates for 1928 are lower than those for 1927, and that there are marked reductions in the 1928 rate over the average for the five years 1921 to 1925.

Infant Mortality Rates, California Cities

	Average 1921–1925	*1927*	*1928*
Alameda	46	9	25
Bakersfield	83	61	58
Berkeley	43	42	31
Eureka	67	49	38
Fresno	77	52	59
Glendale	46	44	35
Long Beach	45	50	38
Los Angeles	69	66	66
Oakland	59	53	47
Pasadena	41	41	32
Pomona	66	41	54
Richmond	58	61	56
Riverside	82	68	84
Sacramento	71	55	67
San Bernardino	103	81	99
San Diego	55	60	47
San Francisco	55	50	46
Santa Ana	78	41	36
Santa Barbara	61	53	60
Santa Cruz	38	45	36
Santa Monica	69	51	45
Stockton	71	49	62
Vallejo	61	64	45

"To cause the citizen to do the things he can and ought to do, and then to do for him the things he can not do, but which should be done, is the duty of the State."—*Eugene H. Porter, M. D., Health Commissioner of New York State, 1905–1914, died August 11, 1929.*

SAN LUIS OBISPO CONTROLS SMALLPOX EPIDEMIC

Smallpox made its insidious appearance in San Luis Obispo during the month of July. Most cases of the disease were of a mild type. Investigations by Dr. Allen F. Gillihan, county health officer, revealed the fact that unreported cases had occurred within the county as long ago as last May. A total of 56 cases occurred. Through the cooperation of the mayor of San Luis Obispo a special vaccination clinic was opened August 12. During the month following that date no less than 4000 individuals were immunized against the disease.

VIOLATIONS OF EGG LAW BRING FINES

The Bureau of Food and Drugs, in cooperation with the Health Department of the city of Los Angeles, has conducted a campaign against dealers who violate the California Egg Law. This campaign consisted of warnings and instruction relative to the requirements of the law, followed by arrest of those who persistently violated its provisions. As a result, ten individuals who failed to heed the warnings were brought into court, where they were convicted and received fines of from $10 to $100.

MANY MERGERS AMONG HEALTH DEPARTMENTS

Sixty-five California cities have now merged their public health administrative activities with the county health department or with their city health departments. The trend toward the merging of health departments began about five years ago. The greatest activity along these lines is in Los Angeles County, where thirty-six cities have contracted with the Los Angeles County Health Department to administer their public health affairs. As a result the Los Angeles County Health Deaprtment is now unquestionably the largest county health department in the United States. Cities of San Diego, Orange, Riverside, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Monterey, Contra Costa and San Joaquin counties have also transferred the work of their health departments to that of the county. These combinations make for efficiency and economy in public health work. Cities which heretofore, because of low population and small income, have been unable to maintain efficient individual health departments are now enabled to secure far better service at a much lower cost.

"There are centuries in which public opinion is the most imbecile of all opinions."—*Chamfort.*

MORBIDITY*

Diphtheria.

26 cases of diphtheria have been reported, as follows: Oakland 3, Lake County 1, Los Angeles County 3, Glendale 2, Los Angeles 5, Santa Monica 1, Napa 1, Fullerton 1, San Francisco 5, San Joaquin County 3, Redwood City 1.

Scarlet Fever.

61 cases of scarlet fever have been reported, as follows: Livermore, 1, Oakland 4, Kern County 1, Los Angeles County 15, Glendale 2, Los Angeles 9, Bell 2, Marin County 1, Merced County 1, Huntington Beach 1, Sacramento 2, San Diego 2, San Francisco 7, Stockton 1, San Mateo County 3, Daly City 1, San Jose 4, Siskiyou County 1, Sutter County 1, Ventura County 1, Marysville 1.

Measles.

28 cases of measles have been reported, as follows: Oakland 2, Los Angeles County 2, El Monte 1, Long Beach 1, Los Angeles 9, Auburn 1, San Diego 3, San Francisco 5, Tracy 1, Paso Robles 1, Ventura County 2.

Smallpox.

5 cases of smallpox have been reported, as follows: Pomona 1, Riverside 1, San Diego 1, San Francisco 1, San Luis Obispo County 1.

Typhoid Fever.

18 cases of typhoid fever have been reported, as follows: Imperial County 5, Los Angeles County 2, Glendale 1, Los Angeles 2, Plumas County 4, San Francisco 2, San Jose 1, Tehama County 1.

Whooping Cough.

102 cases of whooping cough have been reported, as follows: Berkeley 6, Oakland 4, Fresno County 3, Eureka 1, Los Angeles 24, San Fernando 1, Santa Monica 2, Orange County 10, Brea 2, Plumas County 3, Banning 5, Sacramento 4, San Diego County 4, Coronado 1, San Diego 8, San Francisco 9, San Joaquin County 1, Stockton 1, Rio Vista 1, Ventura County 1, Los Angeles County 8, Long Beach 3.

Meningitis (Epidemic).

9 cases of epidemic meningitis have been reported, as follows: Placerville 1, Fresno 1, Kern County 1, Long Beach 1, Los Angeles 3, Sacramento County 1, San Francisco 1.

Poliomyelitis.

4 cases of poliomyelitis have been reported, as follows: Lake County 1, Los Angeles County 1, Los Angeles 1, Paso Robles 1.

Encephalitis (Epidemic).

2 cases of epidemic encephalitis have been reported as follows: Los Angeles County 1, Glendale 1.

Undulant Fever.

Los Angeles reported one case of undulant fever.

Coccidioidal Granuloma.

Long Beach reported one case of coccidioidal granuloma.

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* From reports received on September 9th and 10th, for week ending September 7th.

NOTE.—Cases charged to "California" represent patients ill before entering the state or those who contracted their illness traveling about the state throughout the incubation period of the disease. These cases are not chargeable to any one locality.

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE REPORTS

Disease	1929				1928			
	Week ending			Reports for week ending Sept. 7 received by Sept. 10	Week ending			Reports for week ending Sept. 8 received by Sept. 11
	Aug. 17	Aug. 24	Aug. 31		Aug. 18	Aug. 25	Sept. 1	
Actinomycosis	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
Anthrax	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
Chickenpox	43	35	28	50	40	46	31	43
Coccidioidal Granuloma	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1
Dengue	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Diphtheria	38	38	37	26	64	46	45	44
Dysentery (Amoebic)	0	6	3	2	2	2	2	3
Dysentery (Bacillary)	1	2	7	4	4	0	1	2
Encephalitis (Epidemic)	0	1	1	2	0	1	0	1
Erysipelas	7	7	12	3	9	14	7	8
Food Poisoning	20	4	13	0	1	3	0	0
German Measles	3	3	5	3	13	11	8	6
Gonococcus Infection	94	115	104	131	163	121	100	168
Influenza	9	9	8	7	16	7	7	24
Jaundice (Epidemic)	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Leprosy	0	0	0	0	2	1	2	0
Malaria	1	3	4	3	0	3	0	0
Measles	30	23	30	28	4	12	20	12
Meningitis (Epidemic)	10	10	6	9	4	2	3	2
Mumps	115	95	104	57	51	36	45	36
Ophthalmia Neonatorum	0	1	0	1	0	2	0	0
Paratyphoid Fever	60	0	1	1	1	0	0	1
Pellagra	2	2	7	0	0	1	0	1
Plague	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Pneumonia (Lobar)	25	21	47	36	22	22	25	45
Poliomyelitis	7	11	7	4	6	8	6	6
Rabies (Human)	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rabies (Animal)	7	12	8	13	12	15	17	9
Scarlet Fever	58	68	65	61	38	50	34	39
Smallpox	15	22	24	5	6	12	7	15
Syphilis	90	163	180	116	123	154	157	159
Tetanus	2	1	2	2	1	2	3	2
Trachoma	0	3	0	1	1	1	2	2
Tularemia	1	2	1	0	0	0	1	6
Tuberculosis	157	144	234	178	176	212	148	201
Typhoid Fever	29	20	20	18	22	26	44	15
Typhus Fever	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Undulant Fever	3	3	3	1	1	1	0	0
Whooping Cough	125	161	117	102	188	136	134	93
Totals	953	988	1,079	865	970	949	852	945

There is no indication of a poliomyelitis flare-up.

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Whooping cough continues on its high level.

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A case of coccidioidal granuloma was reported last week.

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Smallpox dropped to five cases reported last week.

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Morbidity, in general, shows relatively few cases of communicable disease reported.

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